

Contributions

LITTLE LESSONS IN CHURCH WORK

G. W. RENCH

I. Church Finances

The suggestions that I may offer from time to time under the above heading are offered with a view of being helpful to my brethren. If you have good plans keep them. If you have none use mine if you can. I am unfortunate in being compelled to grapple with the big subject for the first one. It may be well, however, for my readers.

BIBLE DIRECTIONS

1. I Cor. 16:1, 2: Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

2. Acts 11:29: Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.

3. II Cor. 9:7: Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

4. Luke 21:2, 3: And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.

Observe from these Scriptures:

1. That every one, even to the poor widow, has a part in this work. Not that the church must have the poor widow's money, but that she must have the blessing that could come in no other way.

2. That each is to decide for himself as to how much he shall give, but that it is to be "according to his ability," or "as God hath prospered him." It may be necessary to show some their ability.

3. That this offering is to be set apart "upon the first day of the week." The churches of Galatia had already been given the same directions at Corinth.

To carry out these three things in giving, every one of you, and according to his ability, and upon the first day of the week, I would urge the following:

1. That each member of the church whose name appears on the roll pay into the church expense fund within the year one dollar. If the elders and deacons see fit to excuse any one from this, they shall recommend that the dollar be taken from the poor fund, or missionary fund. It is not a question, seldom, of being too poor to give a dollar a year, but of being willing to save some money for the Lord. It will be necessary for the deacons to send to the non-resident members a letter informing them of what the church has decided to do, and urging them to read the above scriptures, and to send in their dollar.

This letter feature will be worth more than the dollar to any isolated member.

2. To carry out the second item, each member is asked to subscribe an amount, to the extent of his ability, for one year. If some do not do this, the elders and deacons shall call their attention to what others are doing who are in similar circumstances, point out the scriptures to them, and ask them to pay a certain sum.

3. But why on the first day of the week? Because on that day conditions are most favorable for the accomplishing of 1 and 2. It is the Lord's day, and his work receives most attention on that day. God commanded it. People must be helped to pay as well as pray. We should remove the difficulties to one as well as to the other, and I think that Paul knew. Older members who always do their duty should encourage some plan that will help those who do not. Work for the best interests of the church.

Have a supply of collection envelopes in the pockets on the backs of the seats and on every Sunday morning of the preaching service give the offering a place in the service. Every one who wishes his offering to be credited to him on the treasurer's book will place it in the envelope, sign his name, and put it in the collection plates as they are passed. When they are brought to the front a short prayer is made, the plates put down, and the deacons take their seats.

All money, whether for pastor, janitor, fuel or light, should be paid in this way. If all will do this it will encourage the backward to give their nickels and dimes which they would not be willing to subscribe.

Missionary offerings are special and in addition to the subscription, but are to be paid in the same manner as others. The treasurer receives this money as well as all other, and it is included in his report, but as receipts for missions.

The elders and deacons shall twice each year compare the treasurer's receipts with the subscriptions, note the shortages, have the pastor announce that those who are behind in their contributions put forth special effort to pay their part, and take such steps as may be necessary to collect delinquencies. Kindness, yet firmness, will save many a worker for the church.

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A RICH FEAST

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We enjoyed the privilege, on the evening of April 16, of listening to a prominent white ribbon speaker from the State of Mississippi, Mrs. Curney. It was a treat that elevated as well as edified. Not one who sat under the voice of the lecturer but who could say, "It is good to be here."

We can not give the address, but will try to give a brief synopsis of it that may assist some one interested in the progress of the W. C. T. U. in formulating arguments against their persistent foe, the rum traffic.

After an eloquent recital of the hopeful things in the campaign against the saloon, she proposed to present some of the hindrances, clogging the wheels of the temperance reform movement.

1. The corrupt, old political parties that have sold out all dignity and respectability to the whisky power, until it has invaded Congress.

2. The mass of foreign emigrants who are dumped on our shores annually. She took pains to specify that she was not an enemy to the foreigner as such, but to the scum that added to the patrons of the saloon, in connection with the hundreds of thousands of negroes in our country who were almost without exception friends to drink and could be voted by the politicians like herds on election day.

3. Indifference of educated men to the sacredness of the ballot. On election days the educated too often stayed away from the polls, while the ward heelers vote the down town rabble and defeated every measure looking to the suppression of the traffic.

4. Withholding the ballot from the women. Here she recited her struggles in life—to educate herself and three younger children of the family. Her father lost his health in the siege of Vicksburg, and died soon after the close of the war. Her brothers grew up to their majority and on an election day rode off in their dignified manhood, and twitted her, saying, "We owe all that we are to you, dear sister," and tipping their hats said, "We can vote, but you can't." "Yes," she said, "for men to legislate high license and to make laws that I can be hung, should I commit crimes worthy of death." She said, "I wept as never before." She resolved, God helping her, that she would give her life to bring about, if possible, better conditions, and for twelve years she had been an agitator, not only in this country but also in Europe.

5. The venality of the press, that great engine of power; its permission to be bound, hand and foot, by the agents of rum. Here followed many instances in which the press had been the agent in promoting the whisky traffic.

6. The deadness of the consciences of the church members on the question of prohibition. To take a decided stand against the saloon will injure my business. She showed in this connection the dangers attending business ideas in this age; that men were sacrificing their soul's eternal interests at the shrine of business.

7. The habits that obtain in social life among all classes; of treating, etc.; in common parlance, "having a good time," leading step by step down the broad way to ruin and death.

8. Lastly, the license laws that blind men's minds to the heinousness of the sin of drink; the pleas of revenue; the lightening of taxes and such things. Deluded men, robbed of the dignity that should characterize manhood, especially Christian manhood.